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Translators Given Peruvian Approval

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For the last two years the Latin American press, particularly in Colombia and Peru, has been attacking the Summer Institute of Linguistics, known by most missions-minded Protestants and Catholics in the United States as Wycliffe Bible Translators. There were calls for the group's ouster on a number of charges.

But in Peru, one newspaper, *Expreso*, sounded a moderate voice from Lima. When others were clamoring for Wycliffe to be expelled from the troubled country, *Expreso* took what was a radical step — insisting that the work of the linguistics-literacy agency be studied and not terminated abruptly without thorough evaluation.

THERE WERE a few other voices that echoed *Expreso's* viewpoint, but the tide definitely was against the missionary linguists.

On Jan. 10, the Peruvian Ministry of Education informed the public that

a resolution had been drawn up to extend the contract of the Instituto Lingüístico de Verano (ILV), as it is known in Latin American countries, for five years.

In most Latin American countries, such groups, even though they are privately supported, work under contract with the government, with periodical reviews made to see if they should be allowed to continue.

The ILV is from time to time one of the hottest political issues in countries such as Peru and Colombia, while in a country such as Bolivia there seldom is any kind of furor made about them and their activities.

Being outsiders and missionaries, they become prime targets for the Communist Party and for other leftists, particularly at election time. The missionaries then come in for a political flaying on a fairly regular and predictable basis.

EXPRESO, in an editorial, commended the government's decision to retain the ILV and explained part of the political ritual that was involved in the latest fray. The editorial said:

"In spite of the effective and meritorious service rendered by the Institute of Linguistics (ILV); in spite of ILV serving under contract with the minister of education and other public entities with whom they constantly collaborated, a few months ago there arose an absurd, violent and well-planned news campaign against the group accusing the members of violating laws of the land, of being in service of the CIA, of alienating the natives of the jungle, and other unfounded and equally unjust accusations.

As would be expected, there was no lack of steady, official voices which refuted the flagrant manipulation of political extremists against the linguistic group."

The Peruvian government carried out an investigation and received numerous petitions in support of the missionary organization, and agreed with the positive reports of the inroads Wycliffe is making into reducing unwritten Indian languages to writing.

IT IS THROUGH this process that developing countries which allow the linguists to operate are able to improve the lot of the indigenous communities, providing for them an avenue, through literacy, into the mainstream of the prevailing culture.

This is accomplished when the Indian is for the first time able to read his own language, which hitherto had never appeared in visible form — only spoken.

Having, through learning to read his own language, been introduced to the tools of learning, such as the concept of an alphabet, the Indian then can learn Spanish or Portuguese by the same process, which then opens a broader avenue of culture to him, and with it expanding opportunities for economic improvement.

For their part, the Protestant missionaries are permitted to translate the Bible and other literature of high moral value for use among the people. As individuals are born again, then they study the Scriptures and eventually native churches are established, run by the natives themselves.

THE *EXPRESO* editorial concluded that "This decision irrefutably proves that the presence of the ILV is needed in the country and that the government would have committed grave error to cancel the service of a group contracted by Peruvian education and to whom we owe a debt of gratitude."

The Peruvian cycle is almost the repeat of one against Wycliffe in Colombia last year. As in Peru, the organization not only was cleared of being a threat to the country or undesirable, but was commended by the government and given a stronger contract to continue and expand its operations.

Wycliffe, founded by Dr. William Cameron Townsend, now living in Waxhaw, N.C., is the largest foreign missionary and literacy organization in the world. It currently is serving in more than 600 language groups in 25 countries, including some languages which still haven't been reduced to writing in the United States and Canada.

Its headquarters are in Huntington Beach, Calif.